In other news

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Science Showdown in Española draws close to 400 visitors

The recent Northern New Mexico Science Showdown in Española allowed local and regional visitors and students to try out a wide variety of interesting hands-on science, technology, engineering and math activities close to home. The Space Science Team from the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, for example, brought a Portable Planetarium courtesy of the Astronomical Society of Albuquerque and ran planetarium shows all day. The nearly 400 attendees also had a chance to practice flying in balloon flight simulators, thanks to the Balloon Explorium.

Ghost Ranch displayed fossils from Rio Arriba County, the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center discussed scat samples of various northern New Mexico animals and Albuquerque's Explora museum had set up 10 tables with activities that included making paper rockets.

"I was impressed with the number of activities available," one visitor noted. "We learned about the sun, dinosaurs, skunks and how to make an electrical circuit work. We spent an hour at the table stacking wood blocks as high as they could go. There was so much to do and we didn't have to drive to Albuquerque to be involved. Thanks for having this event!"

"My favorite exhibit was stacking the nails on a string and learning how to balance them," a fifth-grader said. "I stacked 360 of them - I even broke the string!"

The showdown was co-hosted by the Explora museum and the Oasis of Peace Youth Group and was sponsored by Los Alamos National Security, LLC.

Monte del Sol Charter School students win top Supercomputing award

More than 240 students representing 64 teams from schools around the state recently competed for over $30,000 in individual Supercomputing Challenge scholarships at Los Alamos National Laboratory, including $10,000 from an anonymous donor. Many other awards included random $100 gifts and teacher appreciations.

Meghan Hill and Katelynn James of Santa Fe's Monte del Sol Charter Sol took the top prize for their research project, "Using Concentrated Heat Systems to Shock the P53 Protein to Direct Cancer into Apoptosis," which posited that using nanotechnology robots can kill cancer cells without damaging healthy cells. The team also won several other awards in the challenge.

The Albuquerque Academy trio of Carl Cherne, Mark Swiler and Jason Watlington took second place for their research, "Population Fluctuation in Ecosystems," which studied interactions between organisms and addressed the question of how wild animal populations fluctuate.

"The goal of the yearlong event is to teach student teams how to use powerful computers to analyze, model and solve real-world problems," said David Kratzer of Los Alamos' High Performance Computer Systems group, who has been serving as executive director of the Supercomputing Challenge. "Participating students improve their understanding of technology by developing skills in scientific inquiry, modeling, computing, communications and teamwork."

Nearly 100 Laboratory employees and another 50 individuals from Sandia National Laboratories, universities and business volunteered for the Supercomputing Challenge.

"Without the support of these volunteers we couldn't provide the first-class event we do for the students, who have worked so hard to get to this point," Kratzer said. "I am grateful for their assistance."

According to Challenge Board president Bob Robey of the Laboratory's Eulerian Codes group, more than 100 Laboratory staff members have gotten their start in the Supercomputing Challenge program.

"The Supercomputing Challenge is one of the most effective of the STEM programs in New Mexico, if not the country," said Robey. "The graduates of the Supercomputing Challenge program provide a talent base to attract high-technology businesses and programs to New Mexico."

To learn more about the annual competition, check the Supercomputing Challenge website. The challenge is open to any New Mexico high-school, middle-school or elementary-school student.

Future entrepreneurs develop business savvy

During an April 22 teen entrepreneur event hosted by the Laboratory's Richard P. Feynman Center for Innovation, participating students had a chance to think about problems that they see in the world and how businesses can help solve them.

"A few of the major points that we covered were minimum viable product, realizing the actual costs of starting and running a business and knowing your customers," the Feynman Center's Isaac Schilling said. "We had each student talk about how they would test the market for their products and they grasped that concept right away. Later, once we started to get into details like licensing, certification and insurance, it completely changed how they wanted to proceed."

The meeting was the first of a series of Feynman Center events over the summer for teenagers interested in entrepreneurship. The goal of the meetings will be to expose teens to the exciting career opportunities in business and the possibility of transforming their own great ideas into viable companies. At the end of the event series, teens will have a chance to participate in a business pitch competition.

New Community Programs Office podcasts

In the new Los Alamos National Laboratory's Commitment To Community In 2015 podcast, Carole Rutten of the Laboratory's Community Programs Office discusses the institution's ongoing investments in economic development, education and community giving.

A second recent podcast, How One Native American Entrepreneur Is Saving A Pueblo From Flooding, features Phoebe Suina of High Water Mark, one of the 2015 Native American Venture Acceleration Fund recipients.

In the Explore the Pajarito Plateau and Northern New Mexico through PEEC Nature Center podcast, Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC) executive director Katherine Watson outlines plans for the PEEC's new multi-purpose classroom donated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC.

My small act: Simple actions have a big impact

As part of the Laboratory's Earth Day commemoration, the institution awarded some 400 employees on 32 teams with Pollution Prevention awards and joined the worldwide celebration of Earth Hour. During Earth Hour, millions of people around the world turned off unnecessary lighting from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. at their respective local time.

Some of the Laboratory's other "small acts" in honor of Earth Day 2015 and year-round conservation have been captured in a six-minute My small act makes a difference video on YouTube.